

10-17-00

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Auzville Jackson, Jr. By:

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PTO/SB/05 (4/98)

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UTILITY PATENT APPLICATION TRANSMITTAL <small>(Only for new nonprovisional applications under 37 C.F.R. § 1.53(b))</small>		Attorney Docket No. 1411(SURA)
		First Inventor or Application Identifier Brisiel et als
		Title Electronic Stockroom and Catalog
		Express Mail Label No. EK817549425US

APPLICATION ELEMENTS <small>See MPEP chapter 600 concerning utility patent application contents.</small>		ADDRESS TO: Assistant Commissioner for Patents Box Patent Application Washington, DC 20231	
<p>1. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> * Fee Transmittal Form (e.g., PTO/SB/17) (Submit an original and a duplicate for fee processing)</p> <p>2. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Specification [Total Pages 13] (preferred arrangement set forth below)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Descriptive title of the Invention - Cross References to Related Applications - Statement Regarding Fed sponsored R & D - Reference to Microfiche Appendix - Background of the Invention - Brief Summary of the Invention - Brief Description of the Drawings (if filed) - Detailed Description - Claim(s) <p>3. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Drawing(s) (35 U.S.C. 113) [Total Sheets 13]</p> <p>4. Oath or Declaration [Total Pages 3]</p> <p>a. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newly executed (original or copy)</p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/> Copy from a prior application (37 C.F.R. § 1.63(d)) (for continuation/divisional with Box 16 completed)</p> <p>1. <input type="checkbox"/> <small>DELETION OF INVENTOR(S)</small> Signed statement attached deleting inventor(s) named in the prior application, see 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.63(d)(2) and 1.33(b).</p>		<p>5. <input type="checkbox"/> Microfiche Computer Program (Appendix)</p> <p>6. Nucleotide and/or Amino Acid Sequence Submission (if applicable, all necessary)</p> <p>a. <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Readable Copy</p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/> Paper Copy (identical to computer copy)</p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/> Statement verifying identity of above copies</p>	
ACCOMPANYING APPLICATION PARTS			
<p>7. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Assignment Papers (cover sheet & document(s))</p> <p>8. <input type="checkbox"/> 37 C.F.R. § 3.73(b) Statement <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Power of (when there is an assignee) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Attorney</p> <p>9. <input type="checkbox"/> English Translation Document (if applicable)</p> <p>10. <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement (IDS)/PTO-1449 <input type="checkbox"/> Copies of IDS Statement (IDS)/PTO-1449 <input type="checkbox"/> Citations</p> <p>11. <input type="checkbox"/> Preliminary Amendment</p> <p>12. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Return Receipt Postcard (MPEP 503) (Should be specifically itemized)</p> <p>* Small Entity <input type="checkbox"/> Statement filed in prior application Statement(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Status still proper and desired</p> <p>13. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Certified Copy of Priority Document(s) (if foreign priority is claimed)</p> <p>14. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</p>			

*NOTE FOR ITEMS 1 & 13: IN ORDER TO BE ENTITLED TO PAY SMALL ENTITY FEES, A SMALL ENTITY STATEMENT IS REQUIRED (37 C.F.R. § 1.27) EXCEPT IF ONE FILED IN A PRIOR APPLICATION IS RELIED UPON (37 C.F.R. § 1.26).

16. If a **CONTINUING APPLICATION**, check appropriate box, and supply the requisite information below and in a preliminary amendment.

Continuation Divisional Continuation-in-part (CIP)

of prior application No: _____

Prior application information: Examiner _____

Group / Art Unit: _____

For **CONTINUATION or DIVISIONAL APPS** only: The entire disclosure of the prior application, from which an oath or declaration is supplied under Box 4b, is considered a part of the disclosure of the accompanying continuation or divisional application and is hereby incorporated by reference. The incorporation can only be relied upon when a portion has been incorporated by reference from the continuing application.

17. CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS

<input type="checkbox"/> Customer Number or Bar Code Label	(Insert Customer No. or Attach bar code label here)			or <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Correspondence address below	
Name	AUZVILLE JACKSON, JR.				
Address	8652 Rio Grande Road				
City	Richmond	State	VA	Zip Code	23229
Country	USA	Telephone	804/740-6828	Fax	804/740-1881

Name (Print/Type)	AUZVILLE JACKSON, JR.	Registration No. (Attorney/Agent)	17,306
Signature	<i>Auzville Jackson</i>		Date 10/16/00

Burden Hour Statement: This form is estimated to take 0.2 hours to complete. Time will vary depending upon the needs of the individual case. Any comments on the amount of time you are required to complete this form should be sent to the Chief Information Officer, Patent and Trademark Office, Washington, DC 20231. DO NOT SEND FEES OR COMPLETED FORMS TO THIS ADDRESS. SEND TO: Assistant Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 9000, Washington, DC 20231.

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FEE TRANSMITTAL

for FY 2000

Patent fees are subject to annual revision.

Small Entity payments must be supported by a small entity statement, otherwise large entity fees must be paid. See Forms PTO/SB/09-12. See 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.27 and 1.28.

TOTAL AMOUNT OF PAYMENT (\$)

395

Complete If Known

Application Number	
Filing Date	
First Named Inventor	Brisiel et als
Examiner Name	
Group / Art Unit	
Attorney Docket No.	1411(SURA)

METHOD OF PAYMENT (check one)

1. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge indicated fees and credit any overpayments to:

Deposit Account Number

Deposit Account Name

Charge Any Additional Fee Required
Under 37 CFR §§ 1.16 and 1.17

2. Payment Enclosed:

Check Money Order Other

FEE CALCULATION

1. BASIC FILING FEE

Large Entity	Small Entity	Fee Code (\$)	Fee Code (\$)	Fee Description	Fee Paid
101 690	201 345	201	345	Utility filing fee	355
106 310	206 155	206	155	Design filing fee	
107 480	207 240	207	240	Plant filing fee	
108 690	208 345	208	345	Reissue filing fee	
114 150	214 75	214	75	Provisional filing fee	

SUBTOTAL (1) (\$)

355

2. EXTRA CLAIM FEES

	Extra Claims	Fee from below	Fee Paid
Total Claims	-20**	=	X =
Independent Claims	- 3**	=	X =
Multiple Dependent			

**or number previously paid, if greater; For Reissues, see below

Large Entity Small Entity

Fee Code (\$)	Fee Code (\$)	Fee Description
103 18	203 9	Claims in excess of 20
102 78	202 39	Independent claims in excess of 3
104 260	204 130	Multiple dependent claim, if not paid
109 78	209 39	** Reissue independent claims over original patent
110 18	210 9	** Reissue claims in excess of 20 and over original patent

SUBTOTAL (2) (\$)

3. ADDITIONAL FEES

Large Entity	Small Entity	Fee Code (\$)	Fee Code (\$)	Fee Description	Fee Paid
105 130	205 65	205	65	Surcharge - late filing fee or oath	
127 50	227 25	227	25	Surcharge - late provisional filing fee or cover sheet	
139 130	139 130	139	130	Non-English specification	
147 2,520	147 2,520	2,520	147	For filing a request for reexamination	
112 920*	112 920*	920*	112	Requesting publication of SIR prior to Examiner action	
113 1,840*	113 1,840*	1,840*	113	Requesting publication of SIR after Examiner action	
115 110	215 55	215	110	Extension for reply within first month	
116 380	216 190	216	380	Extension for reply within second month	
117 870	217 435	217	870	Extension for reply within third month	
118 1,360	218 680	218	1,360	Extension for reply within fourth month	
128 1,850	228 925	228	1,850	Extension for reply within fifth month	
119 300	219 150	219	300	Notice of Appeal	
120 300	220 150	220	300	Filing a brief in support of an appeal	
121 260	221 130	221	260	Request for oral hearing	
138 1,510	138 1,510	1,510	138	Petition to institute a public use proceeding	
140 110	240 55	240	110	Petition to revive - unavoidable	
141 1,210	241 605	241	1,210	Petition to revive - unintentional	
142 1,210	242 605	242	1,210	Utility issue fee (or reissue)	
143 430	243 215	243	430	Design issue fee	
144 580	244 290	244	580	Plant issue fee	
122 130	122 130	122	130	Petitions to the Commissioner	
123 50	123 50	123	50	Petitions related to provisional applications	
126 240	126 240	126	240	Submission of Information Disclosure Stmt	
581 40	581 40	581	40	Recording each patent assignment per property (times number of properties)	
146 690	246 345	246	690	Filing a submission after final rejection (37 CFR § 1.129(a))	
149 690	249 345	249	690	For each additional invention to be examined (37 CFR § 1.129(b))	

Other fee (specify) _____

Other fee (specify) _____

SUBTOTAL (3) (\$)

40

Reduced by Basic Filing Fee Paid

Complete (if applicable)

Name (Print/Type)	Auzville Jackson Jr.	Registration No. (Attorney/Agent)	17,306	Telephone	(804) 740-6828
Signature	<i>Auzville Jackson Jr.</i>		Date	10/16/00	

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**STATEMENT CLAIMING SMALL ENTITY STATUS
(37 CFR 1.9(f) & 1.27(d))--NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION**

Applicant, Patentee, or Identifier: Brisiel, Cooper & Davis

Application or Patent No.:

Filed or Issued:

Title:

Electronic Stockroom and Catalog

I hereby state that I am an official empowered to act on behalf of the nonprofit organization identified below:

NAME OF NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

Southeastern University Research Association, Inc.

ADDRESS OF NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

12000 Jefferson Avenue, Newport News, Virginia 23606

TYPE OF NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION:

- UNIVERSITY OR OTHER INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION
- TAX EXEMPT UNDER INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE CODE (26 U.S.C. 501(a) and 501(c)(3))
- NONPROFIT SCIENTIFIC OR EDUCATIONAL UNDER STATUTE OF STATE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

(NAME OF STATE _____)

(CITATION OF STATUTE _____)

- WOULD QUALIFY AS TAX EXEMPT UNDER INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE CODE (26 U.S.C. 501(a) and 501(c)(3)) IF LOCATED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
- WOULD QUALIFY AS NONPROFIT SCIENTIFIC OR EDUCATIONAL UNDER STATUTE OF STATE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IF LOCATED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

(NAME OF STATE _____)

(CITATION OF STATUTE _____)

I hereby state that the nonprofit organization identified above qualifies as a nonprofit organization as defined in 37 CFR 1.9(e) for purposes of paying reduced fees to the United States Patent and Trademark Office regarding the invention described in:

- the specification filed herewith with title as listed above.
- the application identified above.
- the patent identified above.

I hereby state that rights under contract or law have been conveyed to and remain with the nonprofit organization regarding the above identified invention. If the rights held by the nonprofit organization are not exclusive, each individual, concern, or organization having rights in the invention must file separate statements as to their status as small entities and that no rights to the invention are held by any person, other than the inventor, who would not qualify as an independent inventor under 37 CFR 1.9(c) if that person made the invention, or by any concern which would not qualify as a small business concern under 37 CFR 1.9(d) or a nonprofit organization under 37 CFR 1.9(e).

Each person, concern, or organization having any rights in the invention is listed below:

- no such person, concern, or organization exists.
- each such person, concern, or organization is listed below.

I acknowledge the duty to file, in this application or patent, notification of any change in status resulting in loss of entitlement to small entity status prior to paying, or at the time of paying, the earliest of the issue fee or any maintenance fee due after the date on which status as a small entity is no longer appropriate. (37 CFR 1.28(b))

NAME OF PERSON SIGNING

John G. Mullin, Esq.

TITLE IN ORGANIZATION OF PERSON SIGNING

Senior Vice President, Operations and General Counsel

ADDRESS OF PERSON SIGNING

12000 Jefferson Avenue, Newport News, Virginia 23606

SIGNATURE 

DATE October 3, 2000

APPLICATION FOR UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT

for

Electronic Stockroom and Catalog

by

**William R. Brisiel, Eric G. Cooper
and Mark E. Davis**

Attorney's Docket No. 1411(SURA)

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to the field of electronic commerce and more specifically to a method of optimizing the purchasing process within a centralized or dispersed company or organization.

It is common for businesses to keep a stockroom of items that are required for their daily activities. For most businesses, these stocked items consist mainly of paper products and business machine refills: notepads, computer paper, printer ink cartridges and toner for copy machines. Such stockrooms may also include other items like paperclips and staples however, they do not include all of the items the entire business will need for production of its product or service. In order to acquire all of the materials a business needs, usually a purchaser or other employee must refer to one or more vendor catalogs.

Business product catalogs come in many different shapes, sizes and in regards to computer related item, formats. In order to stay competitive and to take advantage of electronic commerce most vendors and producers have made their product catalogs available in some electronic form. These electronic catalogs may come in the form of a Compact Disc (CD) that can be distributed to customers or the catalog information may be stored in a server that customers can access via the Internet.

In both of these cases a vendor must invest money in the production of the electronic catalogs. All of the vendor's product information must first be stored in electronic format. Then the information must be stored on a CD or in the memory of a server. In the case of a CD, the vendor must pay for mass copying of the CD followed by mass distribution, which includes gathering address information on potential customers and postage charges. When the vendor is ready to publish a new catalog, or just wants to make changes to a few items in the old catalog, the vendor must make, copy and distribute an entirely

new CD. If the vendor chooses to put their catalog on-line, then they must involve themselves in setting up a website and absorb all of the costs associated with establishing and maintaining the website.

Websites typically reside on the World Wide Web, in a server for example, that is accessed via the Internet from a remote location. Multimedia documents found on the World Wide Web are called Web pages. Linking information together with hyperlinks is accomplished by special computer programs or computer languages. Computer languages used to create Web pages are HyperText Markup Language (HTML) and JAVA. A multimedia device should have a keyboard and a pointing device, such as a mouse or pen, so that the user can direct the associations between multimedia elements.

Photographs, drawings, and other still images must be changed into a format that the computer can manipulate and display. Such formats include bit-mapped graphics and vector graphics. Bit-mapped graphics store, manipulate, and represent images as rows and columns of tiny dots. In a bit-mapped graphic, each dot has a precise location described by its row and column, much like each house in a city has a precise address. Some of the most common bit-mapped graphics formats are called Graphical Interchange Format (GIF), Tagged Image File Format (TIFF), and Windows Bitmap (BMP). Vector graphics use mathematical formulas to recreate the original image. In a vector graphic, the dots are not defined by a row-and-column address, rather they are defined by their spatial relationships to one another. Because their dot components are not restricted to a particular row and column, vector graphics can reproduce images more easily and thus provide better output on most video screens and printers. Common vector graphics formats are Encapsulated Postscript (EPS), Windows Metafile Format (WMF), Hewlett-Packard Graphics Language (HPGL), and Macintosh graphics file format (PICT).

A modem, which stands for modulator-demodulator, is the device that

connects a computer to a telephone line and allows information to be transmitted to or received from another computer. Each computer that sends or receives information must be connected to a modem. The information sent from one computer is converted by the modem into an audio signal, which is then transmitted by telephone lines to the receiving modem, which converts the signal into information that the receiving computer can understand. Handshaking is the term used for the signal acknowledging that communication or the transfer of information can take place. Handshakes can be controlled by either hardware or software.

The Internet and most intranets are based on the concept of a client-server relationship between computers, also called a client/server architecture. To access information on the Internet or an intranet, a user must first log on, or connect, to the client computer's host network. This connection can be established with or without user intervention depending on the software. Once a connection has been established, the user may request information from or send information to a remote server. If the information requested by the user resides on one of the computers on the host network, that information is quickly retrieved and sent to the user's terminal. If the information requested by the user is on a server that does not belong to the host Local Area Network (LAN), then the host network connects to other networks until it makes a connection with the network containing the requested server. In the process of connecting to other networks, the host may need to access a router, a device that determines the best connection path between networks and helps networks to make connections. Once the client computer makes a connection with the server containing the requested information, the server sends the information to the client in the form of a file. A special computer program called a browser enables the user to view the file. Examples of Internet browsers are Mosaic, Netscape, and Internet Explorer. Non-multimedia documents do not need browsers to view their text-

only contents and many multimedia documents provide access to text-only versions of their files. The process of retrieving files from a remote server to the user's terminal is called downloading. The process sending files to a remote server from a user's terminal is called uploading.

No matter what electronic format a vendor chooses, CD or website, each is flawed, in that neither one can fulfill all of the needs of all of the employees of a given company or organization. It is virtually impossible for a medium or large sized company to find one vendor's catalog that can provide all of the products that are required by that medium or large company.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

According to the preferred embodiment, an intranet based comprehensive ordering system is provided that allows authorized employees to search from multiple vendor/manufacture catalogs that are stored in a server on a company's intranet. The present Electronic Stockroom and Catalog (ESAC) allows vendors to download their catalogs to the system for storage, browsing and possible purchase by authorized employees. ESAC also allows vendors to update catalogs that may already be in the system. ESAC stores the catalogs and provides the employee with the ability to simultaneously search all of the vendors catalogs for desired items. Thus, employees have access to a wide diversity of items. The present system is an attempt at providing the company with one-stop-shopping for every item that every employee will ever need in the course of their employment. If the desired item is available on-site i.e., in one of the stockrooms of the company, then ESAC informs the employee and provides location information relating to the desired item. Items for sale are browsed via a friendly ESAC interface that allows the employee to search for items using keywords, part numbers and other search methods, such as hierarchical for example. If the desired item is not available on-site, then the item can be

ordered from a vendor. Generally speaking, the ESAC operates within the security of a company firewall and access is not available to unauthorized personnel or the general public who may try to access ESAC via the Internet.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The preferred embodiment will now be described in more detail with reference to the accompanying drawings, given only by way of example, in which:

Figure 1 is a generalized block diagram of the preferred embodiment;
Figure 2 is a general flow chart for the preferred embodiment; and
Figure 3 is flow chart for the vendor catalog download process.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The present Electronic Stockroom and Catalog (ESAC) embodies the notion of a comprehensive distributor by providing access to products both within a company and outside the company, while operating within the safety of a secure corporate firewall. Because of the security provided, the preferred embodiment enjoys full integration with corporate budget, finance and accounting systems, while retaining all the benefits of having access to the Internet. Integration with other company files allows automated budget tracking, payment for purchases and other desired accounting.

Figure 1 shows employee(s) 3-5 of a company using the preferred embodiment. Each of the employees 3-5 has determined that it is necessary to locate or purchase an item that is needed in the course of their business. Employees 3-5 may be within the same building or dispersed throughout several buildings. In both cases their terminals are connected by a LAN that makes up the company's intranet. Server 2 stores and executes the Electronic Stockroom and Catalog (ESAC) program. The server 2 is physically located within one of

the company's buildings and electrically connected to each ESAC terminal. The ESAC stores information about the inventory of the company's stockroom(s) 1 as well as electronic catalogs from various outside vendors 6, thus providing the employees with one stop shopping in regards to their business related shopping.

Employee 3 may be looking for non-standard sized folders that the company has used before. She may think there are some on-site but is unsure. ESAC's interface guides her through Paper Products, to Folders, to specific sizes of folders. If the item is available on-site then she is given location information. If the item is not available on-site then she can place an order for the desired item.

Employee 4 may be looking for parts for a large piece of electronic equipment. Even though it may be unlikely that the parts will be available on-site, ESAC will still check to make sure and then proceed with ordering from a vendor if the parts are not found on-site. Once a purchase order for desired item(s) is prepared, the order is sent to the specified vendor over the Internet. ESAC establishes a connection to the Internet and sends the order in the form of a message to the vendor. Status and confirmation messages may be exchanged between ESAC and the vendor. In the preferred embodiment, ESAC is not connected to the Internet on a full time basis. Outgoing Internet messages and files may be buffered within server 2 and sent at a later time. Similarly, incoming Internet messages and files may be buffered, in another server for example, and retrieved at a later time.

Figure 2 is a generalized flow chart for the preferred embodiment. In the first step 7, an ESAC Authorization software module ensures that the customer is an employee of the company and is authorized to make purchases. The Authorization module can also screen potential customers according to cost centers, budget limitations, single purchase amount and others, in accordance with the company's requirements. After the customer has passed some or all of the authorization tests, they search for the desired item or enter known

information about the item to narrow their search and subsequently find the item within ESAC. Items may be searched by name, key word, part number, by manufacturer or other searchable categories. The search proceeds in a hierarchical manner that efficiently leads the customer to the desired item. Once the desired item is found, ESAC determines if the item is physically located in any of the stockrooms of the company, step 8. If the item is "on hand", then specific location information is provided to the customer and a virtual "issue" to the customer is processed, step 9. In the virtual issue, the on-hand balance is reduced and all financial accounting is accomplished, such as appropriate adjustment of a budget and automatic re-ordering, for example. If it is determined that the desired item is not available on-site, then further information will be entered, step 11, so that the item can be ordered from a vendor. A feature of the present invention is that vendors download their electronic catalogs directly into ESAC. This direct access allows vendors to easily update their catalogs with minor changes. Further, since the customer, or other company employee, is guided by the ordering instructions of the vendor, it is guaranteed that the customer will know all of the information that is required in order to procure the item. Once an order form is filled out, ESAC accesses the Internet and sends the order to the vendor, step 12. After the order is sent, ESAC is disconnected from the Internet. This limited exposure to the Internet aids in providing security to the present intranet based system. Electronic communications that are sent to and received from the Internet are done so in a manner similar to an e-mail message. Messages that are passed between ESAC and vendors can be buffered so that constant connection to the Internet is not required. At step 13, status messages are passed between ESAC and the vendor, and when the item is received at the company, the customer is notified. At step 10, the purchaser takes physical custody of desired item and goes away happy. Step 14 indicates the initiation of any required follow up accounting such

as dropping a received item from a list of back-ordered items, for example.

The preferred embodiment allows the customer to order more than one item and from more than one vendor's catalog. This virtual one-stop-shopping is accomplished by providing ESAC with multiple vendor account code capabilities.

If there are budget limitations based on the vendor, cost center, particular customer or otherwise, ESAC takes those limitations into consideration during the purchasing process. A user friendly interface provides messages to the customer regarding availability of the desired item(s) and informing them of any authorization or other problems with their order.

Figure 3 illustrates the steps that a vendor follows when downloading a catalog to ESAC. Of course the vendor can always mail a computer disk, or other storage medium, to the company that contains the vendor's catalog. If a vendor does mail a disk to the company, then a company employee would load the vendor's catalog to ESAC. However, by taking advantage of electronic downloads directly to ESAC, vendors can save considerable time, money and effort. At step 15, new vendors are identified and transferred to step 16. Vendors that have downloaded catalog information previously skip step 16 and go directly to step 17. Those new vendors that are transferred to step 16 are provided with company requirements such as formats and passwords, as well as any other required information. The company also receives information from the vendor, in step 16, so that the host company is able to establish an account for the vendor. This step need only be done once. After step 16 is complete, the vendor is transferred to step 17 to begin the download. This is the second time that ESAC must connect to the Internet; the first time being when sending a purchase message to a vendor. The vast majority of the time, ESAC is not connected to the Internet. When ESAC is connected to the Internet, security is provided to prevent unauthorized users that are active on the Internet from accessing the ESAC system. Returning to step 17, download begins by the

vendor establishing a connection to the Internet, viewing a company related interface, such as a website, and gaining access to ESAC via a download feature on the interface. In step 18, the vendor designates the catalog information to be transferred and initiates the electronic transfer to ESAC. The catalog information can be received directly by ESAC, if ESAC is also connected to the Internet. Otherwise, the information is buffered outside of ESAC, in another server that is always available on the Internet, for example. If the catalog information is sent to another server, then the information is retrieved and stored by ESAC at a later time. In either case, the download is viewed as a successful download by the vendor. In step 19, the vendor is provided with a confirmation notice of a successful download. If the download was directly to ESAC, then the catalog is available for searching and subsequent ordering, immediately. If the download was buffered, then it is made available for searching immediately after it is retrieved and stored in ESAC.

The preferred embodiment provides a time and money saving advantage to vendors by letting them quickly and inexpensively update their catalogs with new items and/or prices. Further, by allowing the storage and searching of multiple vendors, the preferred embodiment allows virtual one-stop-shopping for every item that every employee within a specified company will need.

The foregoing description of the specific embodiments will so fully reveal the general nature of the invention that others can, by applying current knowledge, readily modify and/or adapt for various applications such specific embodiments without departing from the generic concept. Therefore, such adaptations and modifications should and are intended to be comprehended within the meaning and range of equivalents of the disclosed embodiments. It is to be understood that the phraseology of terminology employed herein is for the purpose of description and not of limitation.

CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A method of storing, searching and purchasing a wide variety of items from an intranet based electronic stockroom and catalog (ESAC) comprising the steps of:

housing the ESAC in a server that operates on a secure company intranet wherein the ESAC can be accessed by authorized employees at one or more terminals;

storing on-site inventory information and vendor catalog information in the ESAC;

allowing multiple vendors to download their catalog information to the ESAC for initial loading of their catalogs or updating of their catalogs;

providing search capabilities for simultaneous searching, by authorized employees, of the multiple vendor catalogs and items that are available on-site; and

integrating ESAC functions with other company electronic files so that budgeting, accounting and authorization limitations are implemented in the purchasing process and tracking of purchases is possible.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein, the step of allowing comprises permitting the vendors to download their catalog information via the Internet to the ESAC and the catalog information includes text and image information.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein, the step of providing search capabilities comprises providing keyword, part number, manufacturer or other descriptor search mechanisms.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein, the step of integrating comprises associating budgeting, accounting and authorization information with each employee and/or group of employees and automatically updating this information upon purchases and/or issues that are made.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein, the step of integrating comprises associating an order for an item with an employee placing the order and notifying the employee when the item is received.

6. A system of storing, searching and purchasing a wide variety of items from an intranet based electronic stockroom and catalog (ESAC) comprising:

- an ESAC program that is executed on a server that operates on a secure company intranet, wherein the ESAC is accessed by authorized employees at one or more company terminals;
- on-site inventory information and multiple vendor catalog information that is stored in ESAC wherein, the vendors are allowed to download their catalog information to ESAC, both for initial loading of their catalog and for updating of their catalog information;
- search capabilities that allow for simultaneous searching of the multiple vendor catalogs and items that are available on-site; and
- ESAC functions that provide integration of ESAC files with other company electronic files so that budgeting, accounting and authorization limitations are implemented with each purchase and tracking of purchases is possible.

7. The system of claim 6 wherein, the vendors can download their catalog information via the Internet to ESAC and the catalog information includes text and image information.

8. The system of claim 6 wherein, the search capabilities provide keyword, part number, manufacturer or other descriptor search mechanisms.

9. The system of claim 6 wherein, budgeting, accounting and authorization information is associated with each employee and/or group of employees and the budgeting, accounting and authorization information is automatically updated with each purchase and/or issue.

10. The system of claim 6 wherein, the step of integrating comprises associating an order for an item with an employee placing the order and notifying the employee when the item is received.

ABSTRACT

An intranet based comprehensive ordering system that allows authorized employees to simultaneously search many different vendor's catalogs that are stored in a server on a company's intranet. The present Electronic Stockroom and Catalog (ESAC) allows vendors to download their catalogs to the system for storage, browsing and possible purchase by authorized employees. ESAC also allows vendors to update catalogs that may already be in the system. ESAC stores the catalogs and provides the employee with the ability to easily search all of the vendors catalogs for desired items. Thus, employees have access to a wide variety of items. The present system is an attempt at providing the company with one-stop-shopping for every item that every employee will ever need in the course of their employment. If the desired item is available on-site i.e., in one of the stockrooms of the company, then ESAC informs the employee and provides location information relating to the desired item. If the desired item is not available on-site, then the item can be electronically ordered from a vendor. Generally speaking, the ESAC operates within the security of a company firewall and access is not available to unauthorized personnel or to the general public that may try to access ESAC via the Internet.

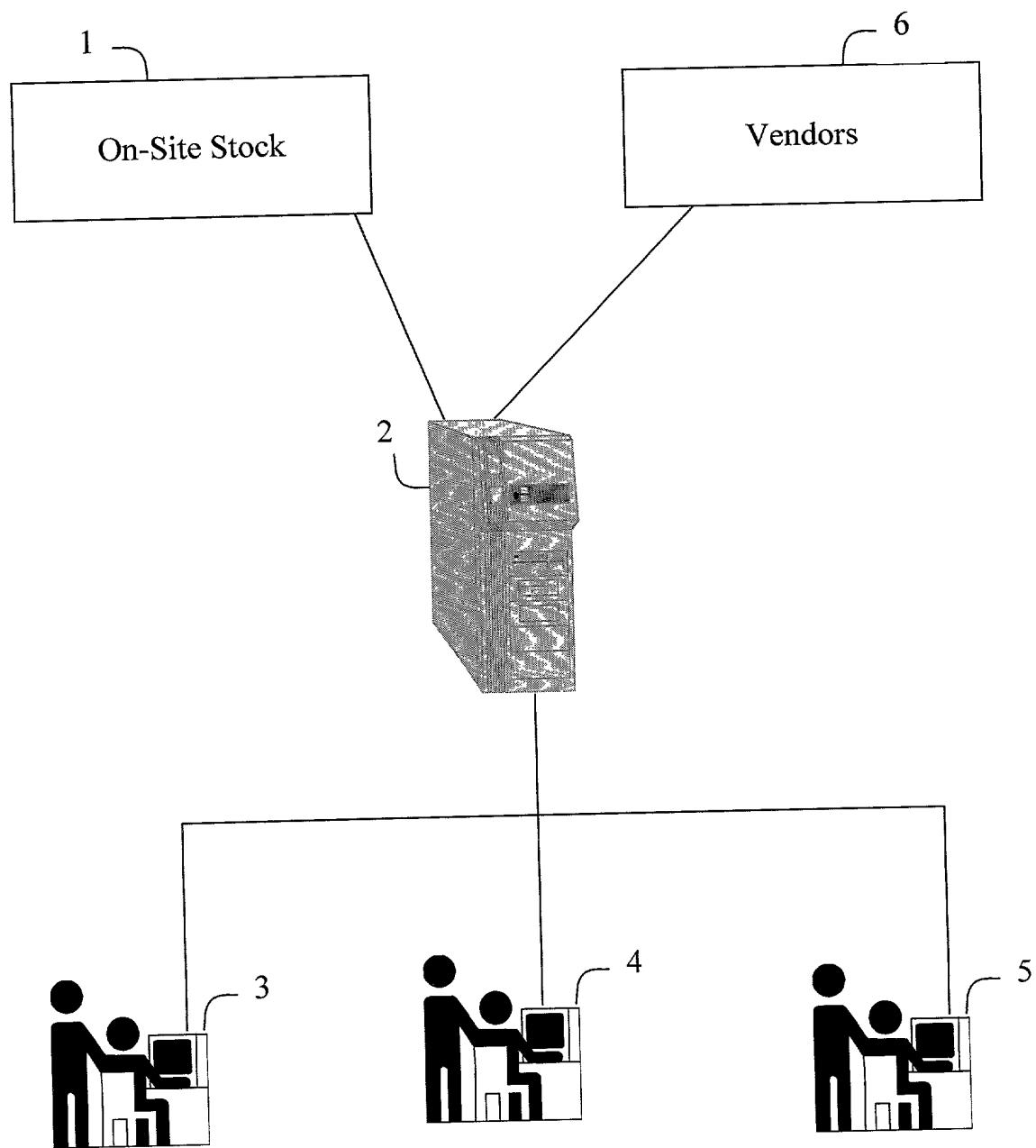


Figure 1

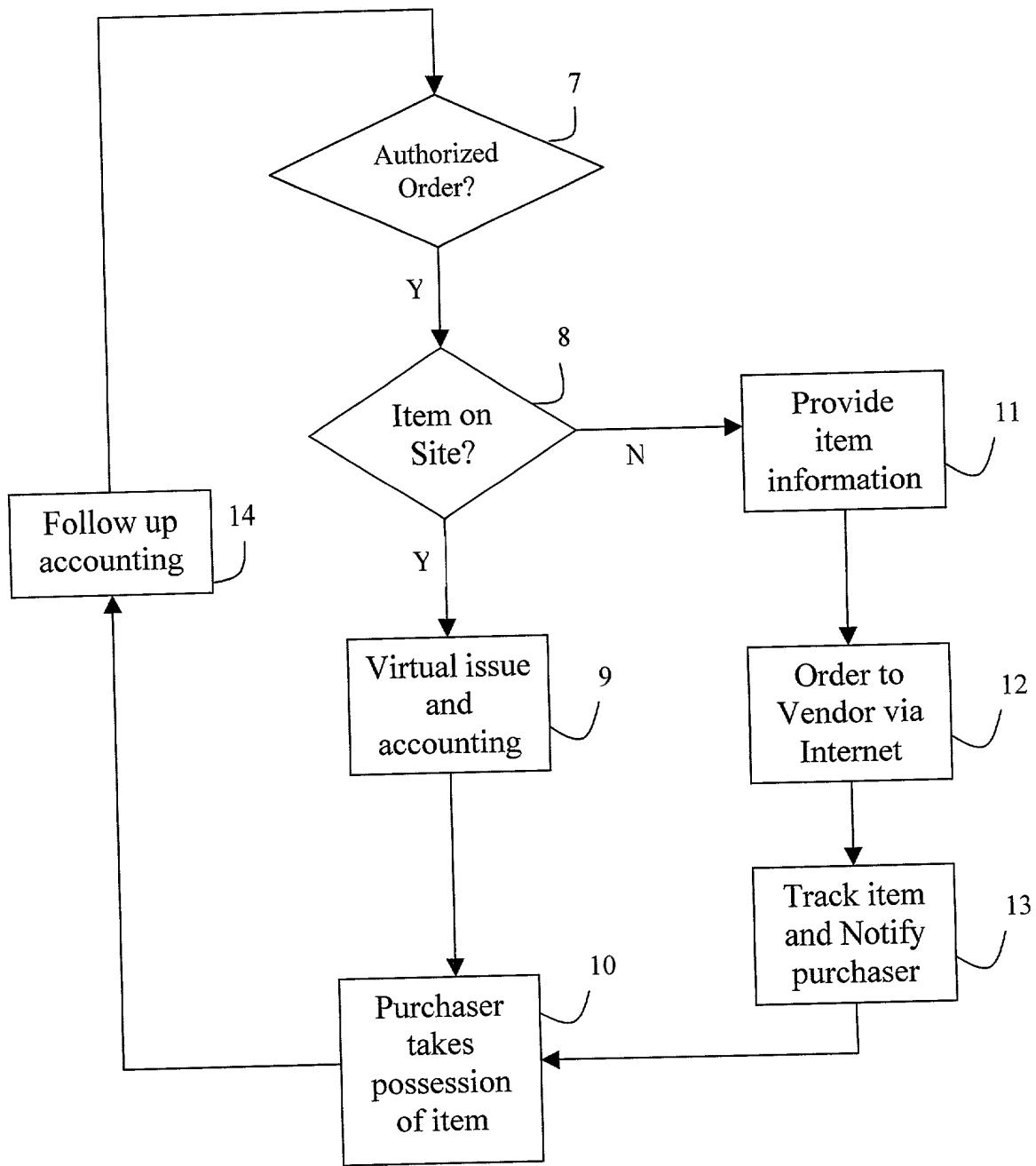


Figure 2

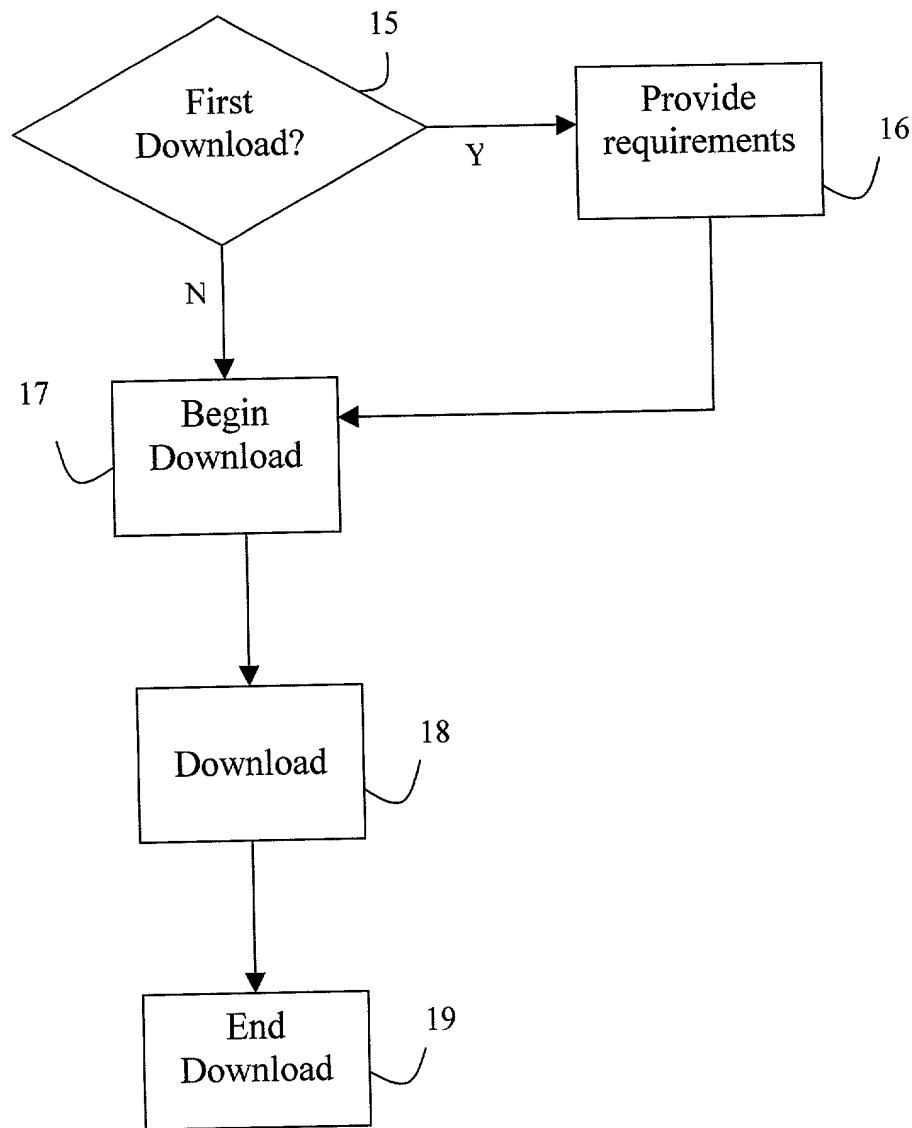


Figure 3

UNITED STATES
COMBINED DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that: My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name, I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled:

ELECTRONIC STOCKROOM AND CATALOG, the application of which is attached hereto.

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above. I acknowledge the duty to disclose to the Office all information known to me which is material to the examination of this application as defined in §1.56. I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, § 119 of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate or of any PCT international application(s) designating at least one country other than the United States of America listed below and have also identified below any foreign application(s) for patent or inventors certificate or any PCT international application(s) designating at least one country other than the United States of America filed by me on the same subject matter having a filing date before that of the application(s) of which priority is claimed.

Prior Foreign Application(s)

Prior Claim

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(Number)	(Country)	(Day/Month/Year Filed)	[]	[]
			Yes	No

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(Number)	(Country)	(Day/Month/Year Filed)	[]	[]
			Yes	No

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, § 120 of any United States application(s) listed below and insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States application(s) in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code, § 112. I acknowledge the duty to disclose to the Office all information known to me which is material to the examination of this application as defined in §1.56 which became available between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application.

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(Application Serial No)	(Filing Date)	(Status: patented, pending, abandoned)

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(Application Serial No)	(Filing Date)	(Status: patented, pending, abandoned)

As a named inventor, I hereby appoint Auzville Jackson, Jr., Reg. No. 17,306, as my attorney to prosecute this application, and transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith and to act on my behalf before the competent International Authorities in connection with any and all international applications filed by me and of which I am the sole applicant and to receive payments on my behalf.

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I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code, and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

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